

A RAMBLER IN LONDON.

XXI.—ON THE UNDERGROUND.

IT has always seemed to me to be more romantic to go by the Underground Railway than to take the 'bus. Consequently, I generally take the 'bus. But there are times when I come fresh from the perusal of some modern novel, in which the hero has black hair, and knows a good deal about hypnotism; on these occasions I do feel that the Underground is much less incongruous. It is true that the routine of the booking-office tends to lower the whole proceeding to the level of a commonplace commercial transaction; but one cannot see a train emerging slowly from the darkness and vanishing into darkness again, without recalling to one's mind William Wordsworth's Ode to Immortality; and, to me personally, the mere fact that I do not know for certain whether or not I change at Gloucester Road makes the journey seem mysterious and even hazardous.

There are many respects in which a station on the Underground resembles all other stations. The guard shows the same supernatural grace and agility in entering his van while the train is in motion. The boy from Smith's bookstall displays the same enthusiasm in his efforts to sell the latest edition. There are advertisements and there are time-tables. The automatic machine here, as elsewhere, pleads with the young man with silent eloquence, tempting him to drop in one penny and take one packet of butter-scotch, and leaving him afterwards to wonder what on earth he shall do with it. But there is very little luggage. I have stood at Euston, and watched the piles of luggage disgorged on to the platform, and attempted sometimes to conjecture the man from his portmanteau. I have been uniformly unsuccessful, but the pastime pleases me. Here one has to conjecture the portmanteau from the man. In the case of that gentleman who twists a little black moustache, makes his own cigarettes, and wishes to know if he is right for "San Jemms' Pa-r-r-k," I should expect to find a battered Gladstone bag still bearing the labels of foreign hotels. Of course, I can never know that my conjecture is right, but that is better than always knowing that my conjecture is wrong, which is my fate at stations not on the Underground.

I am always interested in the advertisements. "Early to bed and early to rise is useless unless you advertise," says the American proverb; but it is quite impossible to think that these advertisements are posted on each side of the line from any selfish motive. They cannot be merely utilitarian, because one passes too quickly to read the whole of them. "Hang your Venetians!" is a line which I have read frequently while travelling in the Underground, and yet it was only the other day that I discovered its full import. At first sight it looks like the cry of some bloodthirsty Italian patriot, but on reading the rest of the advertisement I found that it only referred to a particular way of fixing blinds, which the advertiser desired to recommend. In all probability these advertisements are put here from æsthetic motives, to break the long line of blank wall, and to please the eye. The English sky is not what it should be, and our advertisers probably wished to improve and diversify it when they erected sky-signs. But I do protest against the beautiful girl-child of fourteen, with flaxen hair, tight boots, and a short pink frock, holding up a packet to an amazed and ecstatic mother. The packet may be cocoa, or soap, or pills, or baking powder; but the girl's remark to her mother always begins with, "See, mamma!" and this is maddening.

The compartments which do not quite reach to the top of the carriage are a nuisance, because they often make the man in one compartment the unwilling audience of confidences which are being interchanged in another. The other day the average

young man and average young woman got into the compartment next to mine at South Kensington.

"Emma!" he said.

I coughed, but he would not notice it.

"Emma, Hemma," he went on, "spike to me."

Then I coughed in a way which might have unlinked carriages and disordered the signals at Sloane Street. It had its effect. Before we left South Kensington he was discussing Mr. Irving's Louis XI., and saying some very bitter things about the dramatic critics. It is only safe to discuss impersonal subjects on the Underground. Most passengers know this; and, if they wish to speak of intimate and secret subjects, they do so with a certain care and reservation. Here is a conversation:

"That matter I was speaking to you about on Tuesday night—anything settled?"

"Well, I saw 'im, yer know."

"What, the old man?"

"No, the son. He awsd me to 'ave a glass of wine—sherry wine—but I wasn't to be got over that way."

"What did yer say?"

"Say? I said no-thankyer. I told 'im I didn't drink so early in the mornin'. Then I tackled 'im about the—you know—an' 'e 'adn't a word to say."

"An' what did 'e do?"

"Caved in, regler caved in. He just give me the—the what I wanted, yer know. I wasn't sarcastic exactly, but I let 'im see that I knew what 'e was, and that settled 'im."

It is very low and very despicable, but I felt distinctly curious to know what all this was about.

One idea always haunts me on the Underground. I always remember that up above me the traffic is passing. Men are working, or loving, or sleeping, and under their feet I am passing on some commonplace errand. They do not know it; I am near them, but they do not regard me. I feel like some natural law which works in secrecy and darkness, taking effect at last in the sudden earthquake or eruption. A feeling as grand as this is very cheap at the price charged for a return ticket from Earl's Court to the Temple. I am not quite as disastrous as a natural law, but I am for a time as secret and as dark. It is in the solitude on the outskirts of the crowd that one realises best what the crowd really means. When I am in the midst of the bustle of the Strand I forget the people around me. When, in the solitude of a carriage on the Underground Railway, I am near them and yet apart from them, I think most of their vast significance; of the merchant in millions returning from too good a lunch, of the street-vendor of some toy anxious over every penny, of the hurry of special editions and the leisure of the classes who purchase them. Here within but few yards of me are every class and grade of society, close together locally, immeasurably apart really. How long will this age of terrible contrasts last?

"Temple!" Once more I am in the crowd, and intent on nothing but my own private and particular business.

THE WEEK.

PUBLIC attention has been called, in the *British Weekly*, to the extraordinary device which PROFESSOR TYNDALL has adopted at his house at Hind Head for the purpose of shutting out from his view certain hateful objects—to wit, the houses of his neighbours. It is not, as the writer in the *British Weekly* imagines, to prevent his neighbours from spying upon his movements, but in order that his own eyes may not be offended by the dwellings of his fellow-creatures, that the philosopher has disfigured the summit of Hind Head by erecting upon it a series of battlemented screens, somewhat short in height of the Monument, and at least as hideous as Queen Anne's Mansions. He wished to be a

hermit, and deluded himself with the notion that within half a mile of the Devil's Punch Bowl he might be absolutely solitary. Now that he finds that other people appreciate the air of Hind Head as much as he himself does, he has punished their intrusion in this grotesque fashion. It is only after seeing these vast erections that one can fully understand the vehemence of PROFESSOR TYNDALL'S language on politics.

HIND HEAD was not long ago re-christened Mind Head by a clever lady, who remembered the number of men and women of eminence in science and letters who affect that delightful spot. The district round Haslemere is favoured above most others by the preference which many of our greatest intellectual workers have shown for it. TENNYSON, TYNDALL, and GEORGE ELIOT are not the only well-known names associated with the heath-clad hills and downs in the midst of which Haslemere nestles. To be able to live amid the most beautiful scenery of Surrey, and to have London within a journey of a hundred minutes, is not a small privilege, and it is one which the brain-workers of to-day manifestly appreciate.

ALTHOUGH the company at the Lyceum last Saturday was a brilliant one, including many men of real eminence, as well as a large number of the merely notorious, it did not present quite so great a show of celebrities as one usually sees on a first night at that historic theatre. Neither MR. IRVING nor *Ravenswood* was to be blamed for this fact. It was all the fault of the weather. The first three weeks of September have been so exceptionally lovely that they have tempted many holiday-makers to prolong their sojourn abroad. This explained the absence of some of the most regular attendants at Lyceum first nights.

AS usual, MR. IRVING received his friends on the stage after the close of the performance. The great actor was delighted with *Ravenswood*, and did not allow those with whom he chatted to remain in ignorance of his admiration of the play. Nothing could have been more generously unstinted than his praise of MR. MERIVALE'S work. And yet some of the praise, even for the play, belonged rather to the actor-manager than to the author. MR. IRVING'S own was the happy idea, carried out just before the fall of the curtain, of making a separate scene—one might almost call it a poem without words—of CALEB BALDERSTONE'S despairing clutch at the feather which is all the ruthless quicksand has spared of his much-loved master. It was the finishing touch to the play, and it was unquestionably a touch of genius.

FOR the ghost of SCOTT (in whatever pleasant corner of the Shades fine feeling and good fellowship are united) the week has been a somewhat chequered one. His Lyceum triumphs have been a little marred by the deplorable story of one "W. J." in the *Scotsman* concerning a visit to Abbotsford. "I found," says "W. J.," "that the approach to Abbotsford was by a back slum, which ends in something like a butler's pantry, where one has a shilling to pay." The "shilling to pay" is inevitable; but think of the feelings of SCOTT'S ghost at mention of the back slum and the butler's pantry! Not by these approaches assuredly did visitors reach the Wizard of the North, when he and Abbotsford were in their splendid prime. But there is worse to follow according to "W. J." He had for guide "an apparently careless, uneducated girl," who poked the "curiosities" at him with a pointing-rod, and discoursed of them "in the cheap-jack style." Only "one or two" rooms were shown to him, and after he had been given "the merest glance of the Tweed from a window-pane," they put him out again—by the

butler's pantry. "W. J." inquires, more in sorrow than in wrath, whether this should be? No, it seems a little less than proper. Abbotsford is still the Mecca of many thousands of English-speaking people—from every quarter of the globe—who are of MR. RUSKIN'S way of thinking as to the worth of SCOTT; and it is not thus that the pilgrims to the shrine should be received. The "shilling to pay" must be acquiesced in; but the back slum, the butler's pantry, and the apparently careless girl ought to be summarily disposed of. Is there no descendant of CALEB BALDERSTONE who would do the honours of the Abbotsford of to-day as the master of Abbotsford would have wished them done?

ONE of DION BOUCICAULT'S characteristics was that he made engagements to write plays which he was never able to keep. Remonstrances had no effect, and when the aggrieved people went to see him he received them with a dignity which struck them dumb. An American manager used to relate how he called on BOUCICAULT one day and found a well-known actress there on the same errand. Both were enraged, and they harangued the peccant playwright in turn. But as he was sitting on a kind of platform, as if he were chairman at a meeting, and surveyed them with an air of icy indifference, their wrath gradually evaporated, and they stumbled, and became quite apologetic. At last DION rose, and made them a speech in which he proved that they were the most unreasonable persons that ever lived, that he was a man of the most punctilious habits, and that the pieces he had engaged to supply, and had not produced a line of, were as good as written. Upon this the deputation went away feeling very crestfallen, and MR. BOUCICAULT resumed his occupation with the look of a magistrate who had dismissed an idle mob.

MR. GILBERT HIGHTON is not exactly known to fame, but for some time he has been preparing a "treatise" on *Macbeth*, especially in relation to the performance of the tragedy at the Lyceum. Ever and anon a mysterious allegory, purporting to be the frontispiece of this momentous work, has fluttered over editorial heads. In this picture a number of symbolical figures are engaged in some unintelligible occupation which appears to have given one of them a severe headache. MR. HIGHTON is occasionally heard of in theatrical circles as the sole depository of the tradition of PHELPS, whose elocution in any passages of SHAKESPEARE he is benevolently ready to impart to the most casual audience. MR. HIGHTON may rest assured that the world is waiting for his much-announced volume with a chastened curiosity.

In the English version of *A Struggle for Life*, M. DAUDET'S absurdities about Darwinism are unfortunately retained, though they have nothing whatever to do with the story. The play is, however, a good deal more interesting than the original, which was simply tedious; and MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER and MISS GENEVIEVE WARD endeavour, not without success, to give vitality to conceptions which are scarcely remarkable for truth to nature.

M. SARDOU is very angry. He never said that SHAKESPEARE "*n'a pas le moindre talent*." That is a miserable invention, and he says rather neatly that every journalist who justifies a repetition of the legend on the ground that he never heard of M. SARDOU'S denial, "*n'a pas le droit de connaître l'accusation et d'ignorer la défense*." At the same time M. SARDOU admits that SHAKESPEARE'S statue in Paris offends him. It occupies a position which belongs by right to CORNEILLE. Does this patriotic discontent portend mischief to the image of the Englishman? Should any misunderstanding ever

disturb the *entente cordiale* between England and France, will M. SARDOU head a band of iconoclasts against the intruder?

ANOTHER monthly review! This time it is the *Paternoster Review*, price sixpence, which awaits a welcome at the hands of the reading public. There can be no doubt as to the presentableness of its outward aspect, whilst it comes before us with a strong list of contributors, and a first number which deals with many interesting topics. LORD RIPON writes on India, MR. KEGAN PAUL on CANON LIDDON, DR. MCWEENY on the Potato Blight, and MR. GEORGE LANE FOX on the Primrose League—subjects on which such writers may certainly claim to be experts. That the article on "The Pawnbroker and the Poor" is from the pen of MR. BALL is, we presume, only a coincidence, and not another instance of the resolve of the editor to make names and subjects fit.

THE American humorist seems reduced to a low ebb. His latest device is to write a book with a title which has nothing whatever to do with it. "Never hit a man named Sullivan" runs this legend. The humour of the device is not apparent, and its attraction from the advertisement point of view is more than dubious.

LORD RADNOR's pictures, recently acquired by the Trustees of the National Gallery, have been the great attraction at Trafalgar Square during the past week. Opinions differ (among the humble people who enter the National Gallery with the fear of MR. WATTS before them) as to the merits of the Holbein and Morone; but there can be none as to the superlative excellence of the Velasquez. Such vigour, such colour, such life-like realism impress alike the artist and the amateur, and add a new and real attraction to the many already brought together in Trafalgar Square.

THE letter from SIR FREDERICK LEIGHTON on the management of art galleries has been followed by another from MR. WATTS. It attempts to correct undue haste in educating popular taste. "I think," says MR. WATTS, "galleries of pictures are more for those whose tastes have been awakened and in some degree formed than for those who have never given any attention to the subject. A taste for art, which means interest in all that is beautiful, must be sown, not planted. I think the only way to do anything capable of bearing real fruit would be to attack ignorance and indifference on the subject by getting a number of teachers no more capable of producing pictures than the majority of religious missionaries are capable of being bishops, but who would take the children in schools, or such operatives as might be willing to spend an hour of their holiday time in listening, and demonstrate the wonders and beauty of some of the common objects around."

READERS who are familiar with MR. BARKER's researches into the intellectuals of the School Board child, will, on reading MR. WATTS's letter, recall many sentences that throw a lurid light on the need for such teaching as he indicates. Take, for instance, this famous passage on the Ocean: "So when the teacher told me that flat piece of green water was the ocean, I felt as if I'd just come all for nothin'. I looked at it till I was utterly sick, and I should have set down and done a good cry, only I had to keep follerin' of the teacher, so I hadn't got time. At last I felt so riled that I went up and cote hold of the teacher's coat, and I said, 'Please, sir, can you make it jump a bit?' But he only laught and told me what a funny boy I was.

I do beleeeve he thought I was a kiddin' him. But I wasn't a kiddin' him at all. I only wanted to see the ocean on same as my mother told me it did. A lot of boys got some of the ocean up in their hands and drunk it. You should have seed them spit it out like lightnin'. I wouldn't touch none of the ocean, I was so riled."

AND soon there follows a passage that demonstrates the usefulness of MR. WATTS's suggestions. "I sometimes draw ships and then colour them yellor and blue with my penny box of paints. I can draw steamers best, becose you haven't to draw no sails. . . . Before I seed the ocean I used to make fishes swimming all round the steamer; but I don't now, becose I never seed one fish swimming round them steamers at Portsmouth, much less chivvin' one another. It makes me riled to have to leave them out, but what's the use of putting them in if they're not there? The lesson you have to learn is, always be kind to sailors, and not to say as the sea can jump as high as the clouds when it can only just shift about like shavins." These last sentences clinch MR. WATTS's argument.

As for the adult operatives, whom MR. WATTS would instruct, their attitude towards art has been neatly illustrated in that chapter of "The Hand of Ethelberta," where the brothers Dan and Sol, working carpenters, are taken by their educated sister to see the Royal Academy's Exhibition.

"Catalogue in hand, she took them through the galleries, teaching them in whispers as they walked, and occasionally correcting them—first, for too reverential a bearing towards the well-dressed crowd, among whom they persisted in walking with their hats in their hands, and with the contrite bearing of meek people in church; and, secondly, for a tendency which they too often showed towards straying from the contemplation of the pictures as art to indulge in curious speculations on the intrinsic nature of the delineated subject, the gilding of the frames, the construction of the skylights, or admiration for the bracelets, lockets, and lofty eloquence of persons around them."

PICTURE galleries are good, and so are noble public buildings. But of all English provincial towns, Taunton has chosen, to our mind, the most pleasing way of expressing the graces of citizenship. For many years MR. R. A. KINGLAKE has been turning the Shire Hall of Taunton into a valhalla of Somerset worthies—and they are a notable company. The bust of BLAKE, the admiral, is there; of JOHN LOCKE; of HENRY FIELDING. PYM is there, and BISHOP KEN; EDWIN NORRIS, the philologist; SPEKE, the explorer, and many more. It is now suggested, says the writer of "Notes in the West" in the *Western Morning News*, that some memorial of KING ALFRED should be added, for although the good king was not born in Somerset, his greatest achievements are associated with that county.

A WINDOW in his honour has just been placed in the fine Somerset Church at Wedmore. It was here that ALFRED lived and made his famous treaty with the Danes. Not far away, on the southern fringe of Sedgemoor, stands the little hill of Athelney, where, in times when the hill was an islet, hidden by willows and alders in a network of swamps, he found refuge for many months from his enemies, and where he founded an Abbey in his gratitude. It is a curious hillock in a curious country; and the rare pedestrian who finds his way to the small grey monument on its summit looks on a land that has more than one recompense for his trouble. "The flat plain, with its broad drains or rhines, its lines of pollard willows, its huge patches of withy beds, its roads and rich pasture fields divided by deep ditches instead of hedges, is a veritable Holland in miniature." Ely is known to many, and Runnymede to more; but Athelney is neglected. And yet the ground whence sprang the first hope of English unity has claims to reverence as great as Ely or Runnymede.

THE annual conference of the Library Association at Reading last week has given a slight and much-needed fillip to the free-library movement. MR. GEORGE WHALE, who read a paper on Library Legislation, discussed the value and efficiency of the popular vote, and concluded that no amendment of the law as to public libraries "could possibly be satisfactory which, where there were suitable local bodies to administer the law, left this question to be a matter of special and separate voting on the part of the ratepayers." His audience seemed to be of the same opinion, and there is little doubt that the majority of those who are concerned in advocating the free or public library movement are coming to the conviction that the method of the popular vote is, and always has been, a failure. It is forty years since the Ewart Bill was passed, and during that time the popular vote has given us only a poor two hundred public libraries. Austria has nearly three times that number, France has five hundred, Germany nearly four hundred, and in Italy—where the memories of the deadening tyranny of "Bomba" are barely a generation old—there are four and a half millions of volumes (to say nothing of manuscripts) in four hundred and ninety-three public libraries! But in these countries it is the State and not the popular vote which decides the question; and we, too, may be nearing the day when our local governing bodies will make less ado (despite the opposition of some parsons and most publicans) about adding a penny to the rates for the establishment of public libraries than they do nowadays about sticking up a new lamp-post, or spending five shillings on patching an asphalt path.

WHILE Cambridge is the home of fact—at best a dull thing—Oxford has been called the home of fads. Politer people call it the home of movements. Within the last ten years, "philanthropy," the gentle distemper of untrained minds, has, with its excitement and expenses, excluded from the gaze all other movements, and in the philanthropy of this decade Oxford has taken no small originating part. From Oxford have come Toynbee Hall, a Church House in Stepney, and other residences for undergraduates in East London. From Oxford have come not a few of the new economic ideas. From Oxford, filtered of its solid elements, comes the philosophy of a popular novel. Social reform, with its accompanying ideals, has made Oxford its abiding-place of late. Under these circumstances it is perhaps well, both for Oxford and for social reform, that next week a congress of Charity Organisation Societies is to meet in that ancient and beautiful city to sift its ideas and to give shape to its philanthropy. Ignorant people and swindlers dislike the Charity Organisation Society, the former because they understand it ill, the latter because it understands them well. But, whatever imperfections it may have, at least the world owes something to a body which will not permit its ideas or actions to be flabby, and which forces the unwise to think what their good-nature really means.

AMONG the movements which owe something to the philanthropic impulse at Oxford, University Extension has a place, and it may not be incongruous to mention a rather notable triumph over old prejudices which University Extension has lately won there. With a fine disregard of its poverty and its own scarcity of dons, Balliol has bestowed a Fellowship on the most prominent and devoted of the lecturers on the Oxford University Extension staff, and has thus set a precedent for the endowment of these missionary teachers. Happily it is grossly and grotesquely untrue, as some over-silly person wrote to the press the other day, that

If housekeepers are in earnest in wishing to benefit the unemployed in East London, they should buy BRYANT & MAY'S Matches, and refuse the foreign matches which are depriving the workers in East London of a large amount in weekly wages.

every young Balliol man is a prophet! But the distinction bestowed on MR. HUDSON SHAW is evidence that Balliol is alive to the success of this last Oxford movement, and that at least some of the University authorities regard that success with encouragement and not with fear.

MANY have spoken this week of LORD PENRHYN's political escapade. But it was not only on politics that he made an exhibition of himself in his speech last Monday. He "trusted that he should live to see the day when the Eisteddfodd would be one worthy of being attended by the highest nobles in the land." Now the Eisteddfodd is, according to LORD PENRHYN's own definition, "an institution meant for the encouragement of literature, art, and music." So, possibly, we may soon learn from this egregious person that MILTON's "Paradise Lost" (let us say) is worthy of being perused by the highest nobles in our island—aye, even by the DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE himself!

ARCADIA-SUR-MER.

A FRIEND who moves in military circles in France assured me the other day that the French are as bitter as ever against England, and that the smouldering enmity of the truce may break at any moment into the flame of open war. Here in Boulogne (which seems like a suburb of Folkestone), I see nothing but the most perfect amity between the two nations. No Frenchman scowls at the sons of perfidious Albion, and my countrymen do not wear that "you-be-hanged" air which is the traditional British bearing in foreign parts. Indeed, there is a happy blending of Briton and Gaul which an optimist might regard as an augury of the brotherhood of man. I am inclined to this pacific speculation by the domestic felicity of my *pension*, where all the visitors are gathered like chicks under the wing of the maternal hen. In the early morning the atmosphere is somewhat stormy. We gaze with apprehension from the courtyard at a window where a white curtain is violently agitated now and then, and the piercing voice of the invisible oracle flutters the white caps of the chambermaids, and sends the swallow-tail coat of Joseph streaming through a doorway. But after these alarms comes a great calm, and at lunch Madame adorns the head of the table with an expansive person and a motherly smile, and after dinner departing guests are favoured with minute inquiries about their health, and sometimes a chaste salute on both cheeks. When I see this I defy the military circles to do their worst, and I feel that my bill will be a new treaty of peace between France and England.

Then the sea is a great soother of animosities. When the next European Congress strives to unravel the knots which are too likely to be cut by the sword, the diplomatists should assemble at Boulogne, and hold their most acute conferences in the water. Who knows that the sight of a bouncing English lass in a becoming bathing costume might not soften the heart of the most bellicose statesman? I have two young women in my eye at this moment who combine the physical vigour of their nation with the unconventionality of the mermaid. Mrs. Grundy, in the shape of a mature and stranded spinster, occasionally gasps at the spectacle, but what can be more captivating than the innocent daring of these daughters of the ocean? After all, the sea is the only true Republic, in which dignities are nought and manners are simple; and if these girls are descended from some hardy Norseman, they must rejoice the ghost of their ancestor as well as the compatriot who is watching the sport. Quite as wonderful, though rather terrifying, is their performance at Caveng's in the evening, after the dance at the Casino. Caveng is an obliging pastry-cook who allows his customers to help themselves to his

dainties, and make out their accounts after the foray. The Parisian journalist may denounce the English as robbers, but Caveng trusts his tarts to their sense of honour. Here the hardy Norsewomen wind up the day with an orgie of pastry, which is sometimes succeeded by fried potatoes. Who will say that our race is degenerating when girls can perform these feats of strength? I care nothing for your swimmers and your strong men who lift horses; they may excite the wonder of the gaping idler; but the man who, like Mr. Grant Allen, has his eye on posterity, and concerns himself with the well-being of future mothers, hails the young woman who spends the morning in the sea, dances half the night, and eats sixteen tarts before bed-time, as a great power for the good of her species.

And the Casino! This, indeed, is the temple of peace. Here the Englishman forgets that he has ever denounced the demoralising institutions of France. Here the Englishwoman who lays down the law and the gospel at home, and shows no mercy to the backslider, smiles placidly at the *tableaux vivants*, and sometimes stakes a franc on the *chemin de fer*. I saw Thompson—Thompson the model of severe rectitude—furtively putting a small coin on the red; and when he won, Mrs. T., who was by his side, and whose lectures to the froward are famous, did not rebuke him. But presently Thompson lost the small coin and several more, and then Mrs. T. pulverised him with a look, and sailed out of the room. I have no doubt that a certain circle in Clapham will be agitated for some time to come by tales of “those dreadful French, my dear!” An Irish member who had witnessed the Thompson episode, turned to me and said, “I hope ye’ll write and denounce this *shuang de fur*. Shure and I’ve lost two francs.” In the political world this Irish member is a man of strife, but here he is as amiable as a classic shepherd. He eyes the chief of police (who gravely maintains order with assistance of a pretty daughter), and yet he is never disturbed by a fierce reminiscence of the constabulary of his native land. He watches the dancers in the ball-room as if he were thanking heaven that these are proceedings which he need not interrupt. I really believe he would throw himself into the arms of the Speaker, if that august personage were here, and conjure him to let bygoness be bygoness.

Such is the humanising influence of the *grand bal de famille*. In England we should not dream of going to a tenpenny ball, but here we take our pleasure for this modest sum. Does not the family consecrate the most frivolous amusement? I have heard of a family hotel in Boulogne where the children play the piano on the landing, and the youth of both sexes flirt on the stairs. At the Casino the children represent the sacredness of the domestic hearth by entangling themselves with the waltzers. “Why can’t we have family casinos in England? And why is a harmless frolic for tenpence forbidden to well-conducted maidens?” Perhaps these questions are passing through the minds of some excellent matron, who cannot believe that the youngsters disporting themselves on the floor are little demons of iniquity. But then she remembers the *chemin de fer* and the baccarat table, without which M. Hirschler could not afford to give family balls at a franc a head, and exhibit luminous fountains for the gratification of babies of all ages. The poor man has to pay a very large sum to the Boulogne municipality before he can provide innocent diversions for upright visitors. It is a moral puzzle; but instead of trying to solve it, I refresh myself by watching one of my young Norsewomen waltzing with a fat little man, whose head scarcely reaches her shoulder. He looks as pleased as if he held the happiness of Europe in his arms, and as if statesmen and warriors surveyed him with envy.

These things convince me that I am not merely enjoying a holiday but performing a public duty. I am helping to preserve the peace of the world by subduing national prejudices. The native choler of

the Briton is marvellously tamed. He scarcely chafes even when he is compelled to stand in a *queue* by the complicated bureaucracy which administers the bathing machines. I do not crave for news, but contentedly read the *Petit Journal*, which informs a million or two of subscribers that a hundred thousand people have died of thirst at Chicago. I have no temptation to laugh even when I meet a solemn procession of boy athletes, very thin in the legs, wearing red sashes, and walking to glory with the right hand on the right hip, and the stimulating music of a brass band. You are told that there is no beauty amongst the natives of Boulogne, but I buy a few sprats every day because Caroline is the belle of the fish-market. And if I want romance I remember that Caroline was shunned for a long time by her comrades because she married a man who did not belong to the haughty caste of the fishermen. Such are the simple joys of Arcadia-sur-Mer to a visitor who feels that he is a plenipotentiary and not a tourist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

THE NEXT HOME RULE BILL.

SIR,—If you will allow me, I should like to explain to Mr. Morton that he has failed to apprehend my point, which is, that it is essential that the electorate should be distinctly informed whether the next Home Rule Bill contemplates merely a reversion to a former political arrangement or involves the extinction of the British Constitution and the substitution of a Federal system in its place.

The Home Rule Bill of 1886 proposed simply to revive the *status quo ante* 1782 in Ireland. It did not alter the Constitution of Great Britain into which Ireland was called in 1800. It was based on the belief that the Union with Ireland had failed, that it could not be continued, at least in its present form, without injury and demoralisation to the Imperial Parliament, and that the lesser evil was to give Ireland a statutory and subordinate Parliament and exclude her from representation in Westminster. Even this was, as THE SPEAKER lately observed, a change of “tremendous gravity,” yet one of an entirely different character from that which Mr. Morton says the new Home Rule Bill will be. The retention of the Irish representatives at Westminster essentially alters the scheme of 1886. It is no longer a question of reverting to a formerly existing system, but of starting upon a wholly novel and untried system. The Bill of 1886, *plus* the retention of the Irish representatives at Westminster, obviously puts “the Constitution into the melting-pot;” indeed, one of your correspondents in the course of this discussion declared that this was its greatest merit. But to Mr. John Morley, Lord Rosebery, and Lord Spencer, not to mention many other followers of Mr. Gladstone, “the melting-pot” is anathema. Now, the country has a right to know, and the Opposition Front Bench is bound to tell the country, whether Mr. Gladstone’s policy is a policy of “the melting-pot” or not. If we are going in for Federalism, let us, as Professor E. Freeman observed, go in for it with our eyes open at all events.

I think Mr. Morton does both Mr. John Morley and the late Mr. Bright a grave injustice when he states that they eagerly desired “the Empire to break up into a number of independent States.” No doubt the “Cut-the-painter” policy was a fashionable Radical doctrine twenty-five years ago, and I may add that the fact that no one would dare to advocate it on a platform to-day is not altogether without a lesson for us in our present troubles.

September 22nd, 1890.

E. D.

SIR,—The correspondence which by your courtesy has appeared in THE SPEAKER for some weeks past would seem to have brought forth little or no agreement between the contending parties who have been participants in it. As the controversy grew in volume, strength, and age, the original points of difference grew fainter and fainter until they finally disappeared, and are now no longer brought out. Ordinary arguments, the simple logic of by-elections, and recurring secessions from the ranks of the leaders of the party, have failed completely in making any appreciable difference in the attitude of the Liberal Unionist leaders and their bearing to those with whom they had worked for years. Bitterness and rancour have been painfully conspicuous throughout. Nothing has been learnt by them from the controversy, and it is now hoping against hope to expect in these late days anything like conversion to happen to them. The great difference between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives is that the latter have never expressed any sort of doubt as to what Mr. Gladstone meant by his Home Rule policy. To them it was separation and disintegration of our Empire. And